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TEXT, LIES, AND LINGUISTIC RAPE: REWRITING THEATRE HISTORY IN THE LIGHT OF DRAMATIC TRANSLATIONS

John London
Goldsmiths, University of London
Grup de Recerca en Arts Escèniques, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Although the translation of dramatic texts has received considerable scholarly attention in the last twenty years, a great deal of this energy has been devoted to theoretical or practical issues concerned with staging. The specific linguistic features of performed translations and their subsequent reception in the theatrical culture of their host nations have not been studied so prominently. Symptomatic of this is the sparse treatment given to linguistic translation in general analyses of theatrical reception (Bennett, 1997: 191-196). Part of the reluctance to examine the fate of transformed verbal language in the theatre can be attributed to the kinds of non-text-based performance which evolved in the 1960s and theoretical discourses which, especially in France, sought to dislodge the assumed dominance of the playtext. According to this reasoning, critics thus paid "less attention to the playwrights' words or creations of 'character' and more to the concept of 'total theatre' " (Bradby & Delgado, 2002: 8).

It is, above all, theatre history that has remained largely untouched by detailed linguistic analysis of plays imported from another country and originally written in a different language. While there are, for example, studies of modern European drama in Britain (Anderman, 2005), a play by Shakespeare in different French translations (Heylen, 1993) or non-Spanish drama in Spain (London, 1997), these analyses never really become part of mainstream histories of British, French or Spanish theatre. This phenomenon has created an obvious paradox: if the theatre of a country is to be defined as what is performed within its boundaries rather than merely a literary genre (what is written directly in its national language or languages), then foreign plays make up a, sometimes large, proportion of the repertoire to be examined (Krebs, 2007: 11-16, 19-31). Viewed from a wider perspective, the apparently international fame of dramatists such as Shakespeare, Chekhov, and Strindberg is seen to prove their objective aesthetic, theatrical, and spiritual worth. This

fame is a particularly enticing argument for those wishing to defend avant-garde drama against accusations that it has only a limited appeal (Esslin, 1991: 28; Pronko, 1962: 23). But if the precise nature of translations goes unanalysed, then it is not certain exactly what sort of Pinter or Beckett is being appreciated. Only a rewriting of theatre history incorporating the examination of translations can answer that question. The analysis of the reception of such dramatists often reveals that characteristics initially highlighted in their own cultures have been radically transformed or have disappeared entirely in incarnations abroad.

What follows is a list of five suggested categories in which the translation of modern drama could be studied, with a selection of examples by well-known playwrights within each category. I am concerned with the differences brought about by linguistic translation, the often fundamental changes and distortions which are traceable through language, and the manner in which those changes have been perceived in the target culture. In that sense, each category implies a certain kind of explanation or motivation and, since this is sometimes unclear, there is an overlap between categories. However, they are offered as starting points for establishing the juncture of the translation process at which changes can occur and the ways in which playwrights are deformed in languages other than their own.

This analytical approach therefore acknowledges the written text as the initial basis of performance and recognizes the concept of an original which can be (and often is) distorted. The nuances of what is called a "translation", "version" or "adaptation" (Espasa Borràs, 2001: 95-104) do not matter if the author is indicated as the same, a title is recognizable from the original, and the text is a significant vehicle for the presentation of the imported playwright. Printed translations are paramount as a source, not simply because they are accessible to theatre historians (the same historians who, for instance, use published plays by British dramatists to write histories of British theatre), but also because they are subsequently read by directors who continue the performative existence of a play after the premiere production. This is particularly evident in the long, unstudied afterlife of plays outside big urban centres and in amateur productions. In that context, it is not just a great translation that contains its *mise en scène*, as the director and translator Antoine Vitez claimed (Pavis, 1996: 125), but any dramatic translation. This afterlife can occur even when a classic text is retranslated.

These methodological notions admittedly contradict several notable ideas about translation and performance analysis. It is not relevant, for these purposes, to consider the original as being created by translation or translation as "a moment in the growth of the original" (Derrida, 1985: 232). Since judgements are necessary to establish the nature of changes inflicted on the original and my

categories classify mistakes, it is not suitable to reject the concept of fidelity by arguing, as some theorists do, that a *mise en scène* "does not have to be faithful to a dramatic text" (Pavis, 1992: 26); nor can we follow an analytical route that refuses to label translations a "good" or "bad", by arguing that such evaluations are dependent on the function of the given translation (Anderman, 2005: 8; Espasa Borràs, 2001: 55-56). For the present approach, the original serves as a yardstick. Accordingly, it is possible to compare a translation with its original and assess its reception in the target culture, despite assertions to the effect that it is impossible to establish definitively the "performability" or "speakability" of a translation[1]. It is also necessary to ignore, for the present linguistic approach, the other participants who create the performance itself, unless they have a direct impact on the text. Strategies which emphasize the actors' bodies in the translation process (Pavis, 1992: 136-159) are thus not applicable here[2]. In the context of theatre history my emphasis on the text as a seed for performance may not be so misplaced: we should remember that Greek drama was composed as a written text and, in the west, it was the "the first verbal genre, and for centuries was the only verbal genre, to be controlled completely by writing" (Ong, 1982: 142).

1. The Text

The written text —constituted as a source for the translation—, needs to be identified. This may appear obvious, but, compared to the editorial work devoted to establishing authoritative editions of Elisabethan or Jacobean plays, translators and critics are far less conscientious when it comes to establishing the sources for translations of modern drama. Many of Strindberg's plays were first translated into English from German (Martinus, 1996: 111). Ibsen has become so well-known in English that the English versions of his plays are used for translations in China and Bangladesh, thus perpetuating the lack of humour thereby associated with the dramatist (Anderman, 2005: 94, 99). When Brecht reached Spain in the late 1950s it was in Catalan and Spanish versions translated from the French, not German (Orduña, 1988: 34, 46).

The consequences of translating at two removes from the original are well illustrated by the fate of Fernando Arrabal who writes in Spanish, after which his wife Luce translates his plays into French, the language in which most of them were published and performed initially from the 1950s onwards.

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[1] For such assertions, see Bassnett, 1990: 76-77; Bassnett, 2000: 97-99; Espasa Borràs, 2001: 106-117; London, 1990.

[2] For the present purposes, Pavis's "hourglass" theory of cultures is also inappropriate (Pavis, 1992: 1-23).

Although the Spanish originals of his first plays have also been published, their late appearance and a misunderstanding as to Arrabal's language of composition have meant that the translations of his early drama have been based on the French texts. The injustice of this wider reception of Arrabal's plays and the implied need to retranslate his drama from the Spanish have only rarely been noted (Torres Monreal, 1988) and the effects of translating from the French remain largely unstudied. The French texts have been so successful in excluding Arrabal from accounts of modern Spanish theatre (London, 1997: 211-212) that there is evidence of at least one translation into Spanish (by Carlos Solorzano) of one of his plays —*Fando y Lis*—, for a Mexican production in 1961 (Gille, 1970: 161).

Arrabal's first play, rendered (from the French) as *Picnic on the Battlefield*, provides a hint of the ramifications of basing a translation on what is itself a translation. The short play is typical of the author's initial black, but ludic style: two soldiers eat a meal and seem to play at war like children until they are finally machine-gunned to death at the end. Apart from an inevitable distance from the original dialogue, the most striking result of translating from the French is that the names have very different connotations. The soldiers are called Zapo and Zepo ("Zépo" in French). In Spanish "Zapo" can be pronounced as "Sapo", the form it took in an earlier version by Arrabal (1987: 128) and *sapo* means "toad" or "beast". "Zepo" is pronounced the same as *cepo*, one of the meanings of which is "trap" or "pillory". Needless to say, these connotations disappear in French and English. This is hardly the territory where names as regarded as "monosemic" or "monosemous", and thus directly transposable to another language, as they are by certain theorists of pragmatic translation[3]. It is closer to the field of names that require some translational gesture because they rely on wordplay, such as occurs in Molière, for example (Karsky, 2004: 228-230). Zapo's parents have their names distorted in another way. In English they become Monsieur and Madame Tépan (Arrabal, 1969: 110-126), as they are in French (Arrabal, 1968: 172-196), whereas in the Spanish original they are Señor and Señora Tepán. The non-Spanish identity of the characters is completed by their actual picnic, consisting, among other things, of "tortilla de patatas" in the original (Arrabal, 1987: 132) which is replaced by "sausage, hard-boiled eggs" in English (Arrabal, 1969: 113), following the French (Arrabal, 1968: 176).

The problem of identifying a text from which to translate is accentuated when the dramatist writes his or her own versions of a play in more than one

[3] See Delisle, 1980: 101-102. For a philosophical meditation on the essence of names and their singularity of language within language, see García Düttmann, 1989.

language. Beckett is the most celebrated twentieth-century instance of this phenomenon. *En attendant Godot* became notably sharper and more comic when it emerged as *Waiting for Godot*. "J'écoute", for example, turns into "I find this really most extraordinarily interesting". *Endgame*, in contrast, is less sarcastic than *Fin de partie* (Batty, 2000: 66-67) and *Oh les beaux jours* includes a series of quotations from French literary sources to replace the English references in *Happy Days* (Beckett, 1978: 118-121, 132-134, 143-144). Beckett also became involved in changing his own and other people's translations following his experience with productions. When he had a knowledge of the language concerned, such as German, his transformations of the existing translation were more detailed. He ended up changing his plays for later translators[4]. It is hard not to think that this process, a process which presented a consciously different Beckett in different languages, would continue if the author were still alive.

The other text requiring identification is the translation itself. This is especially relevant for the reception of foreign plays when national variants exist of the target language. It could be argued that part of the negative response to Anouilh's *L'Invitation au château* in New York, in 1999, was attributable to the use of Christopher Fry's British English translation, entitled *Ring Around the Moon*, very much an adaptation, first presented nearly fifty years before (Anderman, 2005: 56-57). Playwrights such as Ionesco have been graced with American and British translations from early on. It is strange to think that *La Cantatrice chauve*, a play with English characters, should have a transatlantic version, but it is worth pointing out that this translation (*The Bald Soprano*) makes less of an attempt to mix languages (such an important feature of the original), so that the phrases of Ionesco's French that are in English —the days of the week, "Charity begins at home", and others— are kept in English (Ionesco, 1958a: 38-39), whereas the British version (*The Bald Prima Donna*) has equivalents —French days and "Honi soit qui mal y pense", for example (Ionesco, 1958b: 116)— and is generally funnier and more innovative. The US version seems to have been less successful and at least one director openly complained of its inadequacies in the 1950s and admitted having changed lines (Phillips, 1959). Moreover, the focus on Anglo-American differences can make us forget other national theatre traditions in English: the British translations of Ibsen had given his characters a distinctly British tone when they were seen in Australia. Indeed, it was in the 1980s that Australian translations of the

[4] On these approaches by Beckett, see Batty, 2000: 63-68. For introductions to the complexity of Beckett's self-translation, see Federman, 1987; Fitch, 1988.

Norwegian playwright emerged and, in the process, corrected previous errors (Akerholt, 1995).

2. LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

The ways in which a translator's misjudgement can deform plays range from making errors (which demonstrate a lack of understanding) to reaching linguistic decisions (which depart quite crucially from the style of the original). In between, lie opportunities for omissions and inconsistencies.

The possibility that a famous contemporary dramatist could be misrepresented in an important European language came to prominence in 1968 when Martin Esslin wrote a vitriolic article on the German translations of Harold Pinter. In *The Birthday Party*, as Goldberg and McCann terrorize Stanley, their questions include "Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?" and "What about Drogheda?". These were rendered into German as "Wer hat an das Stadttor von Melbourne gepinkelt?" ("Who peed against the city gate of Melbourne?") and "Was ist mit Stärkungsmitteln?" ("What about fortifying tablets/drugs?"). When McCann sings "Oh, the Garden of Eden has vanished, they say, / But I know the lie of it still", the words become "O für uns ist verloren das Paradies so heißt es— / doch ich weiß, das ist eine Lüge" ("Oh Paradise is lost they say, / But I know that is a lie"). Esslin supplied a list of quite hilarious mistakes from other Pinter plays as well; what struck him was that these translations had been given productions all round Germany and that critics seemed to have accepted them (Esslin, 1968). A study of Pinter in Swedish reveals similar misunderstandings (Anderman, 2005: 20-21). When British audiences were coming to terms with a play like *The Birthday Party* in 1964, six years after its premiere (Bennett, 1997: 41), an indisputably more illogical and much stranger Pinter was being presented abroad. In this connection it is worth noting just how important Germany was for Pinter's career. The world premiere of *The Dumb Waiter* took place in Frankfurt in German in 1959 and *The Birthday Party* was given a production at Braunschweig at the end of the same year. By 1970, Pinter had won the German Shakespeare Prize[5].

After the German Pinter translations were revised, in great part by Martin and Renate Esslin, many infelicities were eliminated. Nevertheless, closer examination reveals that the German versions remain problematic, to say the least. In the first scene of *The Homecoming*, the language becomes much less colloquial than the original and the first German version. Lenny's casual "I bet

[5] See his speech made on acceptance of the prize (Pinter, 1981: ix-xiii). One wonders how much of the writer's craft alluded to in that speech had been revealed to German audiences.

you're tired", previously rendered fluently as "Klar bist du müde" ("Of course you're tired"), turns into the stylized, and syntactically more convoluted "Das glaub ich, daß du müde bist" ("I can believe you are tired"). In *No Man's Land* echoes and rhythms are destroyed and references mistranslated (Greiner, 2004: 143-154). By comparison, the French seem to have been given a more authentic Pinter, although the fidelity becomes exotic. Who knew what "Qui a arrosé les poteaux de but à Melbourne?" actually refers to if "les poteaux de but" mean "goal-posts"? And is "Et si on parlait de la défaite de Drogheda en Irlande?" (Pinter, 2005: 60-61) sufficient explanation to refer to Cromwell's massacre of 1649?

The sins of transmission perpetrated on Arthur Miller have not been debated so intensely. The fate of *Death of a Salesman* in peninsular Spanish none the less serves as an illustration of the longevity of a version in some instances mangled beyond recognition. The translator José López Rubio eliminated two characters, much of the initial dialogue between Happy and Biff (Happy's materialism and ambition are thus absent), and Bernard's speech expressing his lack of resentment against Willy. These omissions were not as drastic as the numerous textual mistakes: "I've got an accountant inside" (Miller, 1961: 75) becomes "Lo he apuntado en tu cuenta" ("I've noted it down in your account") (Miller, 1969: 75); "In the back seat of the car" (Miller, 1961: 22) turns into "Detrás del asiento del coche" ("behind the seat of the car") (Miller, 1969: 21). The stage directions are given a similarly careless treatment, thereby rendering the action different: Bernard "*enters in knickers*" in the original (Miller, 1961: 24), but in the Spanish "*entra en la cocina*" ("enters the kitchen") (Miller, 1969: 23). These are just a selection of copious slips and inaccuracies[6]. Moreover, there is no record of anybody's realizing the possibility that such faults existed at the 1952 premiere of this version. Indeed, it served as the unique version of the play for Spain and went through five editions until a rival translation appeared in 2000. López Rubio's text has even been used, without any criticism, in an academic account of translation practice (Zatlin, 2005: 71, 73).

In a realm at one remove from the sort of mistakes already mentioned are important stylistic decisions. As is usual with most translations, these tend to belong to one of two tendencies. A foreignizing approach runs the risk of misrepresenting the original precisely by following it too closely and hence making it much stranger in the target culture than it was in the source culture. The Finnish translation of *Oleanna*, for instance, made Mamet's dialogue sound as if neither character was a native speaker of Finnish and familiar speech patterns became unrecognizable. The premiere production of 1994 was not a success and

[6] For a detailed analysis of these mistakes see Espejo Romero, 2003: 26-31.

it did not provoke the controversy the drama had elsewhere (Leppihalme, 2000). While some argue that in Germany and Scandinavian countries audiences accept translations that sound like translations (or, in Pinter's case, mistranslations) (Zatlin, 2005: 2), this foreignizing does not always function as expected.

The other, opposite tendency, is to domesticate the playtext to such an extent that it appears already to be a part of the host culture and the liberties taken by the original author are not taken by his or her translator. In Antoine Vitez's phrase, the translator "under-translates" (Déprats, 1996: 46). This is what has often happened to Sarah Kane's plays. Her colloquial, ungrammatical, cruelly poetic language undergoes grammatical correction. So the Soldier's narrative in *Blasted*, with its absence of subject pronouns and definite articles ("Didn't think so. […] Saw thousands […]. Insides of people's heads […]. Saw a child […]") (Kane, 2001: 50) becomes tidier in French: "C'est ce qui me semblait. […] J'ai vu des milliers […]. L'intérieur des crânes […]. J'ai vu un enfant […]" (Kane, 2010: 74). The same occurs in Spanish: "Me parece que no. […] He visto a miles […]. ['Insides' untranslated]. He visto incluso a niños […]" (Kane, 1999: 149). (There is no reason why the "child" has been made "children".) In the final scene, Ian's truncated "Can bury me next to her soon" (Kane, 2001: 57) becomes the elongated "Tu pourras bientôt m'enterrer à côté d'elle" (Kane, 2010: 85) and "Puedes enterrarme a su lado" (with no translation of "soon") (Kane, 1999: 151). Such choices inevitably underline the shock of content rather than form and create a much less radical playwright abroad.

3. IMPOSSIBLE EQUIVALENTS

Beyond the notion of linguistic competence there are almost always points in a playtext where no exact cultural equivalents are available in the target language. A rarely discussed option sometimes adopted is to leave this material in the original, accompanied by the possibility of a less ambitious translation. Lorca is particularly open to this treatment. In the critically successful UK production of *The House of Bernarda Alba* in 1986 the reapers of the second act were heard chanting in a muffled authentic Spanish, but their words were given in English by the characters on stage, thereby avoiding the embarrassment of singing a ridiculous kind of rhymed English (London, 1988: 6). In an Australian *Blood Wedding* the songs for the wedding celebrations were left in Spanish (Attrill, 1995: 67). The insertion of Spanish dialogue has also been tried[7].

[7] In a production of *The House of Bernarda* at RADA in London in 2003, the director Geoff Bullen left whole speeches in Spanish. Not all the actors proved themselves capable of pronouncing Lorca's language or changing their acting styles accordingly.

When specific elements are changed it is always necessary to question the apparently transnational appeal of dramatists if such changes are required for audience understanding. A French critic objected to Davies, in *The Caretaker*, referring to drinking tea on grounds of verisimilitude, since that drink is associated with genteel old ladies and a tramp would be drinking wine (Anderman, 1998: 72). But it would surely be wrong to transform the text for such expectations if it is acknowledged that the play is by the English playwright Harold Pinter. And yet, when it came to a play far more important in the history of twentieth-century drama, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the cultural transformations were much more evident in the London National Theatre production of 1987. The person responsible for the version, Nicholas Wright, decided that the actors should not be rehearsing Pirandello's own play, *The Rules of the Game*, at the beginning of *Six Characters*. He considered this an obscure reference, "not very relevant" to *Six Characters*, so he had them rehearse *Hamlet* instead (Peachment, 1987). It became one of many textual alterations which made Pirandello's modern classic more British (Taviano, 2000: 346-348). Needless to say, these changes could hardly be contemplated in the translation of a famous novel.

It is only a short step before the accumulation of totally different references converts the play into an entity where questions of textual reliability and linguistic competence (my concern in sections 1 and 2) are irrelevant. When Ranjit Bolt updates Molière's *Les Femmes savantes*, transposes the action to the 1980s, inserts references to Derrida and Barthes, and parodies Marxist literary criticism (Molière, 1989: 18-28), then one is left wondering about the authorship of the play, whatever the arguments about equivalent contemporary effect. The director Jatinder Verma used the term "tradaptation", borrowed from Robert Lepage, as a contraction of "translation" and "adaptation", to describe his own productions, premiered in the 1990s, of *Tartuffe* and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* set in India. Tradaptation is "a wholesale re-working and re-thinking of the original text, as well as its translation and/or translocation into a new, non-European, aesthetic context" (Cameron, 2000: 17).

This is clearly the most extreme category of distortion we have come across. However, in a sense, the adverse reactions which claim that "this is not Molière" as one audience member said (Verma, 1996: 196), also indicate that the violence done against the seventeenth-century French dramatist has actually maintained his identity and reinforced a concept of the original. Presentation is also a relevant factor: Bolt's *The Sisterhood* is self-proclaimed as "this audacious adaptation of *Les Femmes savantes*" (Molière, 1989: back cover), so the reader and audience know not to expect an attempt at fidelity to the original.

More debatable are the cases where a relatively unfamiliar play is relocated. For a 1998 BBC radio version of Valle-Inclán's *Divinas palabras* David Johnston added a narrator and used Irish voices, arguing that Irish rural life operated according to values similar to those in the original setting of Galicia (Johnston, 2000: 96). For *Luces de Bohemia* (of 1920-1924) he likewise had members of the cast deliver some stage directions, but, more significantly, moved the action from Madrid to Dublin in 1915, with Irish names for the characters. Johnston's *Bohemian Lights*, premiered in 1993, was thus situated a year before the Easter Rising, rather than shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution. While Johnston explained the reasons for the transfer in a programme note and considered what he called the "idiosyncracies of the collective experience" to be "encoded into the fabric of language itself, so that they are only really fully visible to the native speakers of a particular language" (Johnston, 1998: 38), it is questionable whether this apparently pragmatic approach presented a Spanish author. If Johnston's "sole intention" was "to establish Valle-Inclán as major force on the stage", since he thought the play unperformable in an unadapted form (Johnston, 1996b: 66), he produced a Valle-Inclán as alien to his source as Verma's Molière. But the difference is that Molière has had a richer history in British theatre and thus has not been dominated by ostensibly distant adaptations[8].

While such mutations obviously distance the translations from the originals, other impossible equivalents are better concealed. How, for example, can one give an idea of the different forms of address —*du*/*Sie*, *tu*/*vous*, *tú*/*Usted*, *tu*/*Lei*— in English? Is it possible to communicate the nuances of interjections? How is social class encoded in language? How can dialects be conveyed? It is easy to overlook these linguistic phenomena and evolve a version without any apparent infelicities or incomprehensible references.

If we define dialects as languages dominated by another, politically stronger language, they are worthy of separate consideration because, in a sense, they can be seen to stand for all questions of fidelity to the nuances of language. Dialects demonstrate when one language exists (implicitly or explicitly) alongside a variant of itself or another language in the source text, and when microcosms of culture (the dialectal culture) stand within a macrocosm before they are transferred to another macrocosm. The translator is usually seen as having two options. The more spirited option is to find an equivalent dialect in the target language. Interesting precursors for this approach are the plays by the polyglot sixteenth-century dramatist Beolco rendered into the dialect of

[8] Only more faithful, published translations have brought English readers closer to the original; see, for example, Valle-Inclán, 1993a; Valle-Inclán, 1993b.

Berry by Maurice and George Sand in 1859 (Dini, 1973: 233-234). Particularly well-conceived projects of the 1980s and 1990s have been the transfer of Hauptmann's diluted Silesian German of *The Weavers* into Scots dialect (a transfer which alluded to precise social parallels resulting from mechanization in the two regions) and work on French-Canadian and Scots dramatists (Findlay, 1998; Bowman, 2000). The second option is to ignore the dialect entirely and translate into a standard, accepted form of the target language, occasionally emphasizing its colloquial aspect. This is especially recommended to avoid any unintentional humour which might result from the use of dialect in the target language (Slobodník, 1970: 142). There is a long tradition of such domestication in the history of literature including prestigious names, such as Baudelaire, who refused to translate into anything but standard French Edgar Allan Poe's idiom for a former slave. Baudelaire's argument was the usual one: no patois would have the equivalent impact (Poe, 1951: 1098-1099). No doubt it was for similar reasons that Tom Stoppard avoided any attempt to convey the Viennese dialect of Nestroy's *Einen Jux will er sich machen* when he wrote his version, *On the Razzle*, for the National Theatre in London in 1981. A compromise between these two options is to have a standard form given a foreign or regional accent to convey the dialect.

Probably the most famous post-war European playwright to write in dialect, Eduardo De Filippo, has had all these options applied to English translations. It was Eric Bentley who pointed out that one of the Neapolitan dramatist's most touching portraits, that of the prostitute Filumena Marturano, in the play which bears her name, derived "half its life from the language—which in translation can scarcely be shown" (1953: 293). Indeed, Bentley's own translation did not fare well when it provided the text for the premiere UK production in Coventry in 1960 (Anon., 1960). Strategies to convey the force or particular charm of Eduardo's Neapolitan have comprised choosing a supposedly equivalent dialect: this was the approach taken for Peter Tinniswood's version of *Napoli Milionaria* which made Scouse from Liverpool the spoken idiom in 1991. When one critic —Clare Armistead— objected, by arguing that Merseyside for the British was not comparable with the Italian perspective of Naples, she received a letter from the National Theatre stating that she did not understand the play (which she did) and that she clearly wanted Spaghetti Italian (which she did not) (Johnston, 1996a: 290). Another stance has been to use exaggerated Italian accents, a route taken for the production of *Filumena* (as it was titled), directed by Franco Zeffirelli, which opened in London in 1977 and ran for two years[9].

[9] It seems, nevertheless, that the Italian accents contributed to the short run of a version of the production on Broadway (Mignone, 1984: 89).

While enthusiasts of Eduardo's theatre have pointed out how inadequate these approaches are (Bassnett-McGuire, 1985: 90; Taviano, 2000: 341-342, 344), the dramatic loss involved in the transfer of Eduardo's language has not been clarified. Take a scene from *Filumena Marturano* in which the central protagonist surprises a young woman, Diana, with whom Domenico (Filumena's long-time partner) is having a fling. Diana speaks standard Italian, but is confronted by Filumena's Neapolitan. The original text makes it quite patent that Diana does not grasp the meaning of Filumena's irate instructions. It is only through the Italian translations of Rosalia (Filumena's friend) that Diana understands she should take off the nurse's uniform and put it on the chair. When Filumena becomes polite again —"*riprende il tono cortese di prima*"— she speaks Italian, although then lapses into Neapolitan when angry with Diana (De Filippo, 1973: 308-309).

One of the most widely available translations simply omits Rosalia from the scene and has Filumena repeat one instruction, all in standard English (De Filippo, 1976: 194-196)[10]. In a translation by the playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker Filumena is further removed from her dialect: the added stage directions indicate that she "*tries to speak formally, grandly*" and her orders become incomprehensible only because she shouts "Take it off!" without saying what "it" is. Rosalia has to explain (De Filippo, 1998: 17-18). The adaptation by Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall which served for Zeffirelli's production also retains Rosalia, but, since all the characters are speaking standard English, her repeated instructions seem redundant. An added stage direction —"*Diana is too stunned to take in the command*"— justifies Rosalia's intervention (De Filippo, 1978: 15). The regional, social, comic, and dramatic potential of the original has virtually disappeared. When a specialist in Italian drama in translation focuses on the validity of Wertenbaker's version as a theatre text, without any mention of such loss (Taviano, 2007: 51-52) and when one expert on Eduardo refers to the version by Waterhouse and Hall as an "excellent translation" (Mignone, 1984: 88) it is obviously cause for concern about the way theatre history is written.

4. SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

If the pressure to change a text comes from beyond the language itself the results can be more extreme. Whereas overt socio-political pressure is most likely to be exerted by dictatorial regimes, theatrical censorship in other countries has done much to transform foreign texts. Beckett's *Fin de*

[10] It was this translation which was broadcast, with very few changes, on BBC Radio 4, 30 May 1988.

partie had its world premiere at the London Royal Court in French in 1957, but several of the changes alluded to above (in section 1), when it went into English the following year, can be attributed to the Lord Chamberlain who objected to calling God "the bastard" and made the author omit "made a balls of", "arses" and "pee" (De Jongh, 2000: 192-194). An English legal loophole meant that texts banned by the censor could be performed if the theatre in question became a club. That was the way Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was performed in London in 1958 after prolonged negotiation (De Jongh, 2000: 110-112).

When the same play came to Francoist Spain a year later, the censorship (or perhaps self-censorship) inflicted on the text was so drastic that its meaning became inverted. In an attempt not to upset sensibilities or contradict official Spanish Catholic views on homosexuality, almost all the swearing was removed and sexual references were diminished. "D'you make Brick happy in bed?" (Williams, 1955: 31) became "¿haces feliz a Brick?" ("Do you make Brick happy?") (Williams, 1962: 25) and "our sex life" (Williams, 1955: 32) evolved into "nuestro amor" (Williams, 1962: 26). The whole discussion of Brick's relationship with Skipper was cleaned up so that words like "sodomy" and "queers" (Williams, 1955: 101-102) are nowhere to be found. The end of the Spanish text has extra dialogue and accompanying music as the hands of Maggie and Brick are about to touch. The denial of homosexuality is almost complete.

Faced by this distortion, some overnight critics confessed their perplexity as to character motivation. However, all of them praised the translation, which, according to a note by one of the translators printed in the programme, did "not differ in any detail from the original play" (London, 1997: 101). One of the critics pointed out that there were changes, although, in a comment symptomatic of the prevailing public atmosphere, she asserted that, for the cause of "decency", the changes had improved the play (Morales, 1959: 26). But this was an exception. Indeed, the critical unawareness was continued two years later when a bowdlerized version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was premiered in Madrid (London, 1997: 102). A recognized American authority on Tennessee Williams subsequently took critics' assertions about fidelity to the original at face value and stated it as an objective fact (Kolin, 1994: 48-49). Given this kind of process in a dictatorship not considered the most brutal of the post-war period, it is worth contemplating how foreign texts fared behind the Iron Curtain.

There are times when the ideological pressure comes from individual translators rather than a functioning political system. A dramatist such as Brecht attracts this sort of attention. Steve Gooch's translation of *Die Mutter*, was thus

developed specifically against existing, so-called "reading translations" to be playable for contemporary radical political companies. After its premiere in 1973 on the London fringe it had a great influence on burgeoning feminist theatre (Greiner, 2004: 159-162; Itzin, 1980: 47, 162, 202). When leftist playwright Howard Brenton came to translate *Leben des Galilei* for the large-scale 1980 production at the National Theatre, his self-declaredly Marxist interpretation, seemingly logical given Brecht's allegiances, in fact ended up magnifying and mangling the source text. For example, by rendering Galileo's self-description "unzufrieden", as "angry" rather than "dissatisfied", he blunted the productive restlessness of the hero by creating an impression of undirected aggression, rather than sharpening a militant stance. Maybe this was the result of Brenton's view, expressed in his "Translator's Note" to *The Life of Galileo*, that Brecht was "a communist and a communist writer" (Kruger, 1985: 42-43). It appears, in addition, that a simplification process took place in a desire for the clarity of communism according to Brenton. Compare John Willett's literal "For where faith has been enthroned for a thousand years doubt now sits" with Brenton's "Where belief sat, now sits doubt"[11]. Despite such differences, Brenton was sure that he had produced what was, in his words, "a very accurate translation" (Hiley, 1981: 7).

5. THE CONDITIONS OF PERFORMANCE

One of the reasons why Brenton could exert his influence on Brecht's style was that he was part of the production process: he had been commissioned to write a version but, since he did not know sufficient German, he used a so-called "literal" translation from which to derive his text. Despite condemnation by professional translators, there is a widespread practice of having well-known writers —with little or no knowledge of the language concerned— adapt existing translations for major productions (Bassnett-McGuire, 1981: 39). Particularly relevant for the presentation of the play and, by extension, its reception, is that the well-known writer in question usually becomes the "translator" on advertising materials, programmes, and even the printed text, whereas the actual translators tend to disappear or are relegated to an acknowledgement in very small print. When Michael Frayn's *Noises Off* was performed in Moscow the Soviet dramatist Mikhail Roshchin just copied most of the real translation, the actual translator disappeared from view, and the reviews centred on Roschchin's new-found taste for farce (Croft, 1992: unpaginated). Of course, linguistically ignorant dramatists are not the only

[11] For this and other comparisons see Greiner, 2004: 155-159.

people in the production process capable of distancing the translated text from its original. The extrinsic influence on the play comes from all those involved in performance. And when directors, actors or even designers intervene with no awareness of the language involved, the sort of notions which imply an informed fidelity (outlined in sections 1, 2, and 3) are inevitably sidelined.

It is plainly not always possible to discover who has been responsible for particular modifications. However, a good example of the way in which the production process can affect the original is the fate of Dario Fo's *Morte accidentale di un anarchico* in English. The sheer quantity of English versions of this play, premiered in Italian in 1970, has been possible because of the author's express permission. It is as if the political satire which underlined the cruel anomalies of the death in police custody of the anarchist Pino Pinelli were continually struggling for relevance outside Italy. In Britain a translation by Gillian Hanna was adapted by director Gavin Richards for his company Belt and Braces in 1979. Although fired by a leftist agenda, Richards ended up omitting theories of terrorism, details about the alliance of striking workers and students (in 1969) and the threat of a paramilitary state. The extent to which details became confused or merely Italianate is illustrated by a reference to *L'Unità*, the communist newspaper, in the original (Fo, 1974: 66), which turns into *Corriere della Sera* in Richards's version (Fo, 1980: 26), precisely the conservative newspaper with which Fo is comparing accounts of the anarchist's death and whose majority shareholders are big business companies. The central character, the Matto or Maniac, had his speeches cut up, or interrupted. (He was played by Richards when the production transferred.) There was a general attempt to make the comedy even more ridiculous. When the Matto is making fun of the detectives' logic, according to which a railway worker would be the person responsible for planting bombs at the station, he gives a list of similar ideas and concludes with the one that the bomb planted at the Bank of Agriculture was planted by "a banker or a farmer/agrarian landowner" (Fo, 1974: 34). Richards adds "and the bomb at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier undoubtedly perpetrated by a corpse" (Fo, 1980: 14). Exclamations such as "Bloody balls" and "Cock! Complete cock!" (Fo, 1980: 27) are inserted in places where Fo has no equivalent dialogue at all. When these words are put in the mouths of policemen, Fo's sinisterly stupid representations of law enforcement become merely buffoonish[12]. This text appears to have been made to conform with the acting style of Belt and Braces, influenced by variety theatre and pantomime (Itzin, 1980: 199-206).

[12] For an analysis of these and other omissions and exaggerations, see Hirst, 1989: 85-93.

Richards's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* ran for two years in different venues (including a West End run) and was broadcast on Channel 4 television. Even though Fo warned about the erosion of the satire (Fo, 1980: iv) and tried at one point to stop productions based on this version (Taviano, 2004: 330-331), Richards's deformations were taken by reviewers as Fo's own words and the text was put on school and university syllabuses in Britain (Mitchell, 1999: 262). It seems also to have inspired sections of the next major adaptation for the UK, by Alan Cumming and Tim Supple, for a 1990 production which Supple directed and in which Cumming acted as the Matto. For example, the joke about the tomb of the Unknown Soldier (here called "the Unknown Warrior") is retained (Fo, 1991: 25). By still setting the action in Milan, but including mention of the Guinness scandal, having an imitation of Prince Charles and referring to the Birmingham Six, the version made a mockery of the original context (Fo, 1991: 1, 5, 8, 13, 74). Admitting to no knowledge of Italian, Cumming and Supple actually proposed that the text be changed for subsequent productions to suit the circumstances (Fo, 1991: xxiii-xxiv). Critics tended to base their judgement of this version on Richards's adaptation, as if the latter were authoritative (Taviano, 2005: 46).

The 1990 UK version served, in turn, for Robin Archer's Australian adaptation which comprised, in addition, local references (Fitzpatrick & Sawczak, 1995: 21-23). Meanwhile, in the US and Canada, different versions similarly prepared for specific productions have injected Democrats, Republicans, Reagan and, in one case, an attack on local newspapers, into Fo's play[13]. Some changes have been incorporated with Fo's consent, but the underlying political gravity of the original has almost always been diluted. The conditions of performance have converted Fo's text into an all-purpose play with no fixed identity.

Whereas the productions of Fo's play formulated a version which could then be reproduced if the adaptation in question went into print, some textual transformations remain part of the production. An emerging field, ripe for investigation in this context, is the use of surtitling, mostly associated with opera, although now common when foreign companies go on tour. For Gesher Theatre's adaptation of Babel's *Odessa Stories* the actors performed in Hebrew when they visited the UK. Yet the English surtitles playfully engaged with the spoken text. When the standard Hebrew for "man" was used, the English surtitles gave extra local colour by employing the Yiddish "mensh" (London, 1999: 17). It would, therefore, be unwise to limit analysis of this medium just

[13] See Davis, 1986. Although Davis is critical even of his own production of the play, some measure of his distance from the original can be grasped by the fact that he refers throughout his article to the "Matto" as the "Motto".

because, as one expert has argued, the criterion of performability does not apply (Snell-Hornby, 2007: 114).

Conclusion: Into The Twenty-First Century

It could be argued that the overlap between the categories outlined actually obscures potential analysis. The conditions of performance (5) may well be related to a given ideology linked to the socio-political context (4). As in the case of Fo, the distortions could be seen to result from the need to find impossible equivalents (3) or from the use of the wrong source text (1), itself a translation. However, the advantage of maintaining a form of categorization is that the origin of the transformations can be clarified. When we know who is responsible for the new playtext, it is usually easier to see the reasons for the loss of identity, if this has occurred. Moreover, the positioning with regard to the initial text in the foreign language also becomes clearer. As the categories rise in number, the need for knowledge of any linguistic original tends to diminish. This is because categories 1-3 derive intrinsically from the text itself, while 4 and 5 are caused by factors extrinsic to the text.

Whatever the causes of misinterpretation, the issue is of continuing importance. Surveys indicate that between 8 and 12% of American and British professional theatre consists of foreign drama and the percentages are usually higher in mainland Europe (Hale & Upton, 2000: 1; Londré, 1988: 48). Yet much critical thinking on performance analysis does not animate a detailed approach to linguistic transformation. A specialist in theatrical translation asserts that "the question of the original author's intention is just a red herring" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1981: 40), which it may be, but that should not obviate the need to identify and respect the original text. Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil may be accessible to non-French speakers, but to emphasize its "non-verbal means of expression" (Bradby, 2002: 114) belittles the role of language. The growth of international theatre festivals likewise promotes the idea that performance is comprehensible whatever the languages involved; performance analysts have followed suit by positing theatrical expertise above knowledge of language and culture (for example, Gorman, 2006).

Meanwhile, the National Theatre in London, by promoting a project on contemporary French drama, has sanctioned once more the process by which playwrights become translators by adapting so-called "literal translations" (Komporaly, 2003). A significant example of current practice based on mistaken identity is the translation of Sergi Belbel's plays. Although he almost always writes his drama directly in Catalan, his European fame has been achieved through translations of Belbel's own Spanish versions of his texts (London,

2007: 460). Modern classics continue to be played in distorted forms: a West End production in 2003 of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* involved the usual reliance on cultural clichés and a grotesque updating (Taviano, 2005: 100-103).

As we have observed, newspaper critics —hardly helped by theatre historians— do not dedicate much attention to the minutiae of these questions. Take the review written by veteran critic Michael Billington of a recent production of *Blood Wedding*. There is no mention of the fact that the text was based on a "literal translation" or that several characters have simply been excised (the three Woodcutters), or transformed (Lorca's Beggarwoman —who is Death— becomes a man). Nowhere is there an indication of how radically the end of the second act and the whole of the third act have been adapted (García Lorca, 2005). Instead, Billington calls Tanya Ronder's translation "sharp, precise" (Billington, 2005).

Of course, the text is just a part of the translational enterprise. Non-linguistic distortion can take place when differing conventions of acting, directing, set and costume design clash with the source culture. In that sense, the consideration of theatre within the embryonic field of non-verbal translation awaits investigation (Poyatos, 1997). In the meantime, there is plenty of scope for reassessing the contribution of the translated text to the history of theatre[14].

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[14] I would like to thank Ronnie Ferguson for advice on one section of this article.

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